

WAN-IFRA Board Press Freedom Resolution – Tanzania, 2019

The Board of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), meeting in Glasgow, Scotland on 3rd June, 2019 during the 71st World News Media Congress, 26th World Editors Forum, and 3rd Women in News Summit, calls for renewed global solidarity with the Tanzanian press in the wake of attacks and the hardening government stance against independent, free media.

The Board of WAN-IFRA denounces a systematic campaign by the Tanzanian government to attack and intimidate the press as a means of preventing critical and opposition voices, as well as controlling information available to the Tanzanian public.

The Board is outraged by the ongoing failure of Tanzanian authorities to credibly investigate the disappearance of freelance journalist Azory Gwanda, who went missing in November 2017 after reporting on a series of mysterious killings in Tanzania's Coastal region. It notes with concern senior Tanzanian officials' statements diminishing Gwanda's case. Establishing the truth about Azory Gwanda's whereabouts is critical for press freedom in Tanzania.

The Board of WAN-IFRA regrets to acknowledge the maintenance of the Media Services Act of 2016, which was found by the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) in March 2019 to restrict freedom of the press and expression. The Board welcomes commitments made by Tanzania's information minister to review the law and joins the EACJ to call for the government to take the necessary steps to bring it into conformity with the constitutive treaty of the East African Community.

The Board also notes with alarm the adoption of the [Electronic and Postal Communications \(Online Content\) Regulations](#) of 2018, which forces online forums, blogs, and streaming websites to register with the government and incur prohibitively expensive fees or threat of legal action. The Board notes how these new regulations caused the online discussion platform [Jamii Forums](#) to [briefly shutdown](#) and seek to undermine the anonymity granted to its users.

The Board supports Jamii Forums co-founder, Maxence Melo, in his efforts to maintain his online platforms, as well as in his ongoing legal challenges from the government, including charges under the the 2015 Cybercrime Act. It notes with concern Tanzania's failure to reform its Cybercrime Act and its continued use as a tool of legal intimidation against the press.

The Board acknowledges with compounding concern the pattern of newspaper bans since 2017, including against *Raia Mwema*, *MwanaHalisi*, *Mawio*, *Tanzania Daima* and *The Citizen*, and how accusations of false news, inciting violence, and sedition used to legitimize suspensions serve to intimidate journalists.

The Board was outraged by the detention and hostile interrogation of staff of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in November 2018. Tanzanian officials' interrogation of Muthoki Mumu and Angela Quintal about their interest in Tanzanian press freedom, including the disappearance of Azory Gwanda, is absolutely unacceptable and is inconsistent with subsequent claims by Tanzanian authorities that the arrests pertained to visa issues. The board was similarly outraged by the interrogation and subsequent deportation in April this year of Dr Wairagala Wakabi, executive director of the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) on nebulous grounds of "national

interest". Wakabi was to have attended a two-day workshop of civil society organisations, online journalists and human rights activists on how to safely use online platforms.

The Board of WAN-IFRA reminds Tanzania of its obligations as a signatory to international conventions regarding freedom of expression, and it unequivocally calls on Tanzania's international partners to do more to pressure President Magufuli's government into guaranteeing an environment that better protects media freedom and the independence of journalists.